

JESUS: The Greatest Life of All

STUDY SIX

Resting in Christ

Matthew 11:28–30

Why do we live under so much stress? I have the answer that is simple and may be misread as simplistic, but it isn't. The answer is we do not know how to rest.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

OURS is an age of ease. At no other time in history have people enjoyed more time-saving conveniences and leisure-inducing comforts. And yet, despite all our advances, many people feel more frantic than ever.

Therapists make a living by calming the fretful. Many of the illnesses that physicians treat are symptoms of anxiety and stress. Headaches, stomach problems, joint pain, weight gain, sleep loss. The top-selling medications in America are digestive aids and anxiety reducers. If pharmaceutical sales are a gauge of the emotional well-being of a culture, we're a stressed-out bunch—uptight, overwhelmed, maxed out, wound up, and ready to snap.

Why are stress levels so high? Simply put, *people don't know how to rest.*

God built in us a need for rest, and our best teacher is Jesus, who offers His rest to anyone who comes to Him. By “rest,” Jesus means more than a Sunday afternoon nap—although most people could use more sleep! His rest is a frame of mind that is free from worry, frantic rushing, nagging futility, and fear.

Jesus' rest sounds inviting, doesn't it? Let's look closer at what Jesus is talking about and discover His rest through a closer walk with Him.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Take your first step in response to Jesus' invitation in prayer.

Father, during His earthly ministry, Jesus never rushed or worried. He modeled a trusting relationship with You as His Father that I long to have and can have through Him. Teach me His restful way as I learn from Him through Your Word. In His name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

We open Matthew's gospel at a midpoint in Jesus' ministry, which began in Galilee and included Jesus:

teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. (Matthew 4:23)

People flocked to Jesus from everywhere—from “the Decapolis, and Jerusalem, and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan” (4:25 NASB). They came in droves. “Large crowds followed him wherever he went,” Matthew wrote (4:25). “And whatever their sickness or disease, or if they were demon possessed or epileptic or paralyzed—he healed them all” (4:24).

But what good was physical healing if people remained spiritually sick? So, Jesus invited people to come to Him for inner restoration—“rest for your souls” (11:29).



Observation: Jesus' Invitation to Rest

Read [Matthew 11:28–30](#) in three versions of the Bible—The New American Standard Bible for a literal translation, the Amplified Bible for an explanatory translation, and The Message for a paraphrase. Observe how the translators communicate Jesus' words in different ways. Write down a phrase or two that intrigues you and speaks to your need.



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There's so much here, isn't there! Let's examine Jesus' teaching phrase-by-phrase, using a fourth version, the New Living Translation, as our guide, but keep the other versions in mind.

Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."
(Matthew 11:28–30)

Commands and Promises—Matthew 11:28–29

Can you spot Jesus' three commands (or invitations) in *Matthew 11:28–29*? Write them on the lines below.

1. _____ (11:28)
2. _____ (11:29a)
3. _____ (11:29a)

What promises do you see in these verses? The sentences contain the verb, "will."

Jesus said, "Come to Me." The "Me" is capitalized, referring to Jesus. Rest is directly connected with the person of Jesus. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Contrasts and Descriptions—Matthew 11:28–30

What is the condition of the Jewish people Jesus addressed, according to *Matthew 11:28*? Note the reason for their condition in *23:2–4*, and record what you observe.

You're under a burden, you're under stress, you have a quota to meet, you have demands people place on you, you have one of those bosses who's never satisfied. Work, work, work, try, try. Try harder! It's always more. Exhausted. Heavy-laden. It's where we live.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Instead of “religious rituals that provide no peace” (11:28 AMP), Jesus offered another spiritual path. How did Jesus describe His “yoke” and “burden” in *11:30*? What appeal did Jesus have in contrast to the way of the Pharisees?



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The center point of these verses is Jesus' self-description. Why should people trust Jesus, according to *Matthew 11:29*? What contrast do you see between the character of Jesus and the Pharisees?

I'm not saying that there won't be pressures. That's unreal. I'm not saying that there won't be times of confrontation or disappointment or broken dreams. I'm saying that you can rest through them. Jesus' rest is available all day, every day, and every night.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Defining Key Concepts

Interpretation unlocks the door to meaning. How would Matthew's readers have understood Jesus' invitation to rest? Commentator William Barclay sheds light on the nature of their weariness:

Jesus spoke to [people who were] desperately trying to find God and desperately trying to be good, who were finding the tasks impossible and who were driven to weariness and to despair. He says, "Come unto me all you who are exhausted." . . . It is Jesus' claim that the weary search for God ends in himself.¹

Jesus' "yoke is easy to bear" (11:30), unlike the exhausting demands of the Pharisees. If you have a commentary on Matthew or a Bible dictionary, look up the meaning of Jesus' metaphor of a "yoke" and write down what you find. For an online resource, consult *Constable's Notes* at netbible.org.



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Jesus appealed to people trying to keep the Mosaic law and Pharisaical traditions—a burden that Paul later called “a yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1 NASB). Jesus’ yoke, however, is unlike anything found in any other world religion. What does it mean to wear His yoke? For help in answering this question, look for clues in the other Bible versions of our passage that you read earlier.

When oxen were yoked together, they pulled together. They worked together. The discipline of discipleship certainly must be in the back of Jesus’ mind. He said, “I offer you something you enter into with Me.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The Message calls Jesus’ way of living as “unforced rhythms of grace” (Matthew 11:29 MSG). Why is Jesus’ way of living a light burden and not “heavy or ill-fitting” (11:30 MSG)?

What did Jesus mean by saying, “I will give you rest” and “you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28–29)?



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Look up the definition of the Greek word *anapauo*, which is the word for “rest.” Write down what this word means and any insight you gain.

By inviting people to *come* to Him, *take* His yoke, and *learn* from Him, what was Jesus asking people to do, specifically? What did they have to leave behind? What did they have to submit to? Into what new relationship did they have to enter?

The Greek word has to do with “refreshment.” Resting from one’s efforts. Relaxing, even amid responsibility. Wouldn’t that be a great way to live? That’s exactly what Christ offers us. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Correlation: Fulfillment of Prophecy

Correlation takes us to Jeremiah's prophecy that Jesus was fulfilling by offering His rest. Read [Jeremiah 6:16](#) and write down what this verse says.

What crossroads do you think the Jewish people stood at in Jesus' day? What crossroads do we stand at in our day? What two ways lay before them and us?

If you come to terms with what Jesus taught, your life will be transformed. You will live no longer under your circumstances. You'll live above them. You will no longer be driven by shame or guilt. You'll live on a plane above it all, because you have applied what it means to rest like Jesus taught and modeled. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Application: Following Jesus to a Life of Rest

When we submit to Jesus' leadership and let Him teach us, we learn how to live as He lived. We learn to . . .

- Cope with hardships as He coped with them
- Handle pressures as He handled them
- Respond to enemies without retaliating
- Forgive others even when they don't realize their offenses

We see life through the lens of eternity, patiently enduring short-term difficulties because we have a long-term perspective. We relate to people as Jesus did—as souls created in the image of God who all have the same basic needs for love, hope, and peace.

This way of living can only be “easy” and “light” if we yoke up with Jesus—that is, live as His disciples in a trusting, interactive, submissive, teachable relationship with Him.

Imagine yourself going through this day yoked with Jesus. What would you do differently? How would you face trials? Relate to people? Experience rest?

How does Jesus' character—that He is “humble and gentle at heart” (Matthew 11:29)—comfort you?



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How can you experience Jesus' rest each day? Pastor Chuck Swindoll offers this strategy: start each day in prayer.

Before you put your feet on the floor, pray, "Lord, today is Yours. Start to finish, it's Your day. I want to get in the yoke with You. When I put my clothes on, I want to think of it as putting a yoke on that belongs to You. Let's link together. I release the cares of my day to You. The pressures, demands, and stresses are Yours. I walk in Your strength. I relax in Your power and care. In Jesus' name, amen."

Pray Pastor Chuck's prayer now and each morning. Enjoy the peaceful pace of walking with Jesus.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for sending Your Son so that I can come to Him by Your Spirit, submit to His yoke, and learn His ways. Thank You for helping me come back to Him when I stray and stumble. I entrust myself to You as I follow Your Son. In His name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, vol. 2, The Daily Study Bible Series, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), 15–16.

